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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 001903

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SUBJECT: DARFUR: GRIM PROGNOSIS FOR THE COMING WEEKS

Classified By: E. Whitaker, Pol/Econ Chief, Reason: Section 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Over the next few weeks, increased military action in Darfur is likely to continue, as the SAF, perhaps in cooperation with SLM/A Minawi, seek to destroy National Redemption Front (NRF) rebels while recapturing traditional SLM/A Minawi-held areas. The GNU may seek to prosecute a military victory over rebels opposed to the DPA. AMIS will be increasingly unable to carry out its limited mandate, as GNU acceptance of a UN peacekeeping operation remains unlikely. Humanitarian access, at its lowest point in the past three years, will continue to suffer the consequences of local fighting, and render delivery of basic human needs to affected IDP camps difficult. The GNU will continue to seek rebel support for the DPA, despite limited public understanding of its promises. End summary.

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Security Environment: SAF, SLM Minawi Poised for Attack  
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¶2. (C) The Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) are engaged in ongoing combat with the NRF in North Darfur. Hostilities will continue, with the SAF likely attacking NRF targets of opportunity and conducting major combat operations if the NRF moves towards South Darfur. SAF operations may be in cooperation and/or coordination with the Sudanese Liberation Movement (SLM) forces of Minni Minawi to re-take areas of North Darfur lost in July to NRF forces. Conflict will probably include defensive efforts to protect major towns from attacks, such as the July 3 attack by the NRF on Hamrat el Sheikh in Western Kordofan, and subsequently attacks against SLM/A Minawi forces in the Korma, Birmaza, and Muzbat corridor. The Weekly AMIS Security Assessment for July 27 ) August 2 states that the apparent SAF offensive in the Jebel Moon and Kulkul and the follow-on military action are likely to produce "killings on a scale not seen since 2003" (Comment: this might be an exaggeration. End comment.) However, Minawi believes that the SAF will pick and choose opportunities based on threats to strategic hubs. For example, both El Fasher and Melit have been heavily reinforced with SAF forces, while NRF attacks against Minawi forces in Sayeh (30 kms from Melit) have not been assisted by the three battalions of SAF troops in Melit.

¶3. (C) Targets of the SAF and SLM Minawi are likely to include NRF components ) Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), G-19, and Chadian reinforcements. However, in the near-term both Minawi and SPLM are trying to engage with both SLM Abdel Wahid and the recent breakaway group under Ahmed Abdul Shafi. A key SAF objective will likely be to prevent non-Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) signatory rebels from further impacting the DPA or moving into South Darfur (Comment: a point recently made by President Bashir to Charge Hume. End comment.) Given that at least some NCP hardliners believed a military victory possible in Darfur until earlier this year, it is also possible that the SAF and

SLM Minawi may seek to eradicate them altogether. Recent Sudanese negotiations with Chad and Eritrea may have achieved agreements to cease support for Darfur rebels, adding to the GNU's military resolve. However, there are reports of two recent Eritrean aircraft landing in Abeche with military weapons and munitions for the NRF. Other complicating factors include widespread banditry and car-jacking and continued fractionalization of rebel movements.

¶4. (C) Without immediate, significant support, the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS), will become increasingly irrelevant, as even its limited ability to monitor (but not prevent or stop) a largely unobserved ceasefire decreases. Even if kept on life-support by a late cash infusion, AMIS will remain a weak player in Darfur. Without promise of a UN peacekeeping operation, parties will become increasingly risk averse, further limiting the provision of basic human services and relief access to the hundreds of thousands of IDPs throughout Darfur. GNU officials state that the government has a plan to restore stability and security in Darfur by means other than a UN force. (Note: we have received the plan in Arabic from the MFA, and are translating. End note.)

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Humanitarian Access: From Bad to Worse  
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¶5. (C) According to AMIS and some NGOs, humanitarian access is at its worst status in the three plus years of the Darfur conflict. The Weekly AMIS Security Assessment for July 27 ) August 2 lists the threat to NGOs in Darfur as elevated, which is defined as "probable attack, abduction, or

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hijacking." As the rainy season progresses, it will become more and more difficult for humanitarian goods and services to be delivered to remote areas, where many of the IDPs live.

Attacks on humanitarian and government workers, as well as banditry and car-jacking, will continue to weaken the ability to reliably deliver essential food and medical supplies by ground. On August 7, UN Humanitarian Coordinator and Deputy Special Representative Manuel da Silva reported that the level of violence being faced by humanitarian workers in Darfur is now unprecedented, with eight workers dying in the line of duty during the month of July, more than in the previous two years combined.

¶6. (C) OCHA says many Sudanese humanitarian workers are afraid to enter the internally displaced persons (IDP) camps, and humanitarian access has thus fallen to its lowest level since the Darfur relief operation began. Many of the hard-fought gains of the past two years will slowly erode, leaving behind a populace perhaps even less likely to be able to return home. The brief rainy season in Darfur is closing; an inability of IDPs to plant this season's crop will see the marginally productive region slip into a fourth year of food dependency. It is ironic that the railroad terminus in Nyala, South Darfur, was once a point of export shipment of live animals, sorghum and millet, and oil seeds.

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Political Dynamics: Stalling, Stiffing  
a UN PKO  
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¶7. (C) Although some rebels breaking off mainstream movements are aligning with the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA), many Darfurians remain unaware of its vision for a stable Darfur. Continued hostilities and limited humanitarian access loom larger, and deny space for a political message offering prospects for stability and economic development. The GNU's calculation might include providing incentives to Darfur rebels to agree to the DPA, combined with plans to liquidate

remaining opponents.  
HUME